

“Armstrongs”

Sir.—This discussion started with Langholm's claim to be “the home of the Armstrong Clan” which we in Liddesdale refute. I now quote from “Langholm As it Was”.

“Eskdale fought for England at Bannockburn”, “The Elliots, like the Armstrongs were a Liddesdale Clan”. “The main interest in the Armstrong Clan, as far as Eskdale is concerned centres on Johnnie Armstrong” —“Armstrongs were at Mangerton 1376-1610—First Armstrongs in Eskdale 1456”.

Johnnie Armstrong emigrated from Liddesdale to Eskdale about 1500 and was in his 40s when murdered. After Flodden, 1513, Dacre aided by outlawed Armstrongs devastated Eskdale, including Langholm. The Armstrong confederation broken in 1529, when as a united clan they were no longer effective. Many went to England and served as mercenaries, Dacre used them in his secret service.

Maxwell was suspected of being in the plan to entrap Johnnie. Johnnie's brother was suspected of betraying him. (Perhaps John Ardin's play was not so far wrong). In 1544 certain Liddesdale Armstrongs seized Maxwell who was conveyed to London as prisoner, they then spoiled his town of Langholm and put England in possession of the Town and brought away all the goods and four prisoners. It was in English possession until 1547 when it was retaken after seige. Sandy Armstrong and his seven sons were then in England in receipt of a pension for their part of the affair. (Letter from Scottish Estates to French King states) Langholm Castle was built in 1526. In 1544 it was in English possession through treachery of the Armstrongs of Gilnockie. Kinmont Willie's father about this time was granted lands in Cumberland for services rendered. In 1569 the Barons combined against broken men, their wives, bairns, tenents and servants who were not allowed to abide or pasture on land outside Liddesdale.

In 1593 the Eskdale Armstrongs in accordance with their bonds rode with Maxwell at Dryfe Sands where Maxwell was defeated with loss of 700 men.

James Hogg also wrote “Lock the door Larriston” and like ballad writers and minstrels throughout the year sprinkled in a few names and gave his imagination its head. At the recent study conference on Border Ballads it was held that 50 per cent. of the Ballads were fictitious but which?—Yours etc.,

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